

BILL WILLINGHAM • RUSS BRAUN

VERTIGO

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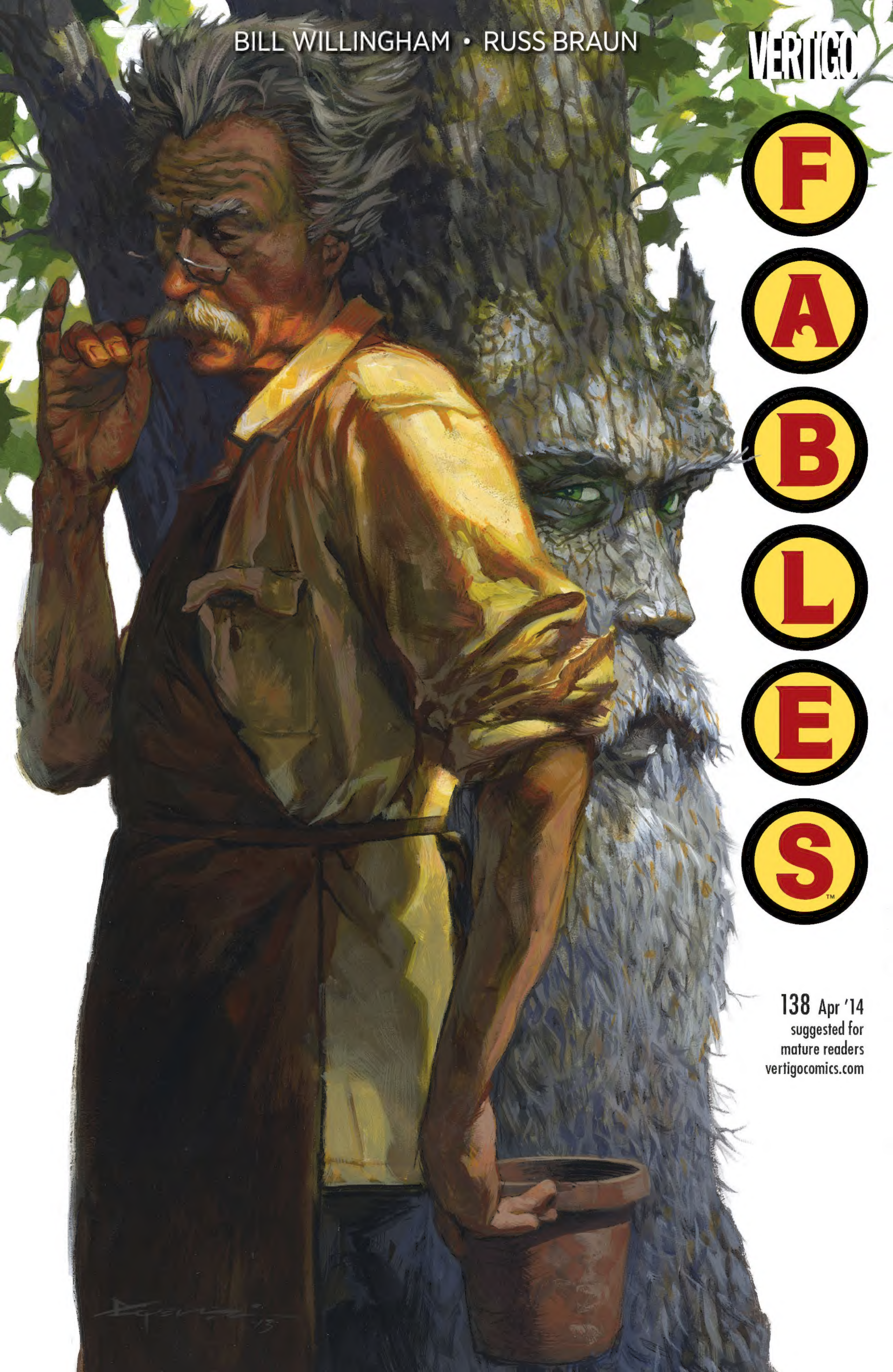
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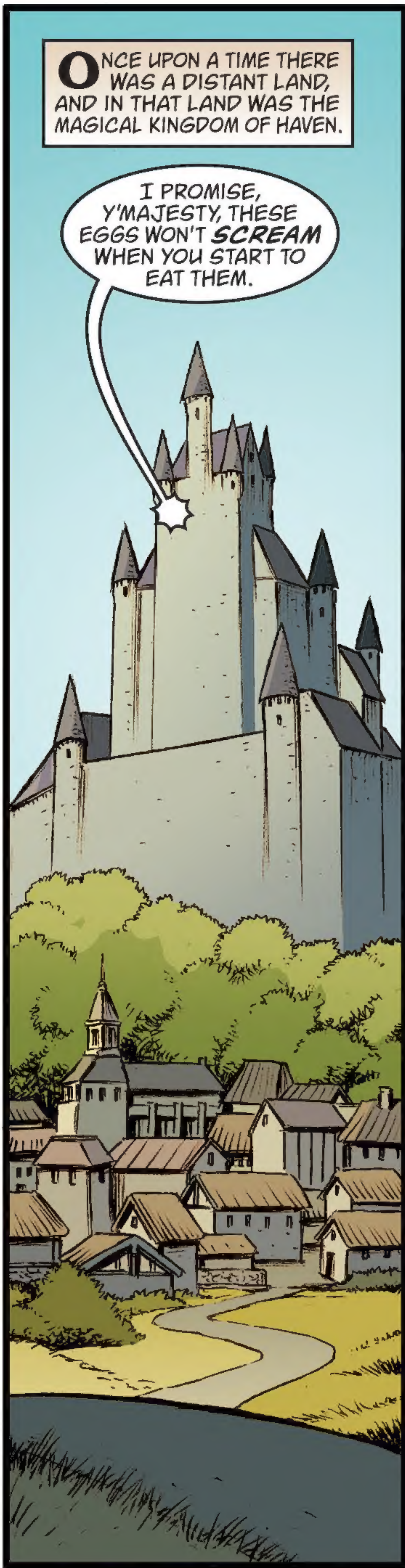
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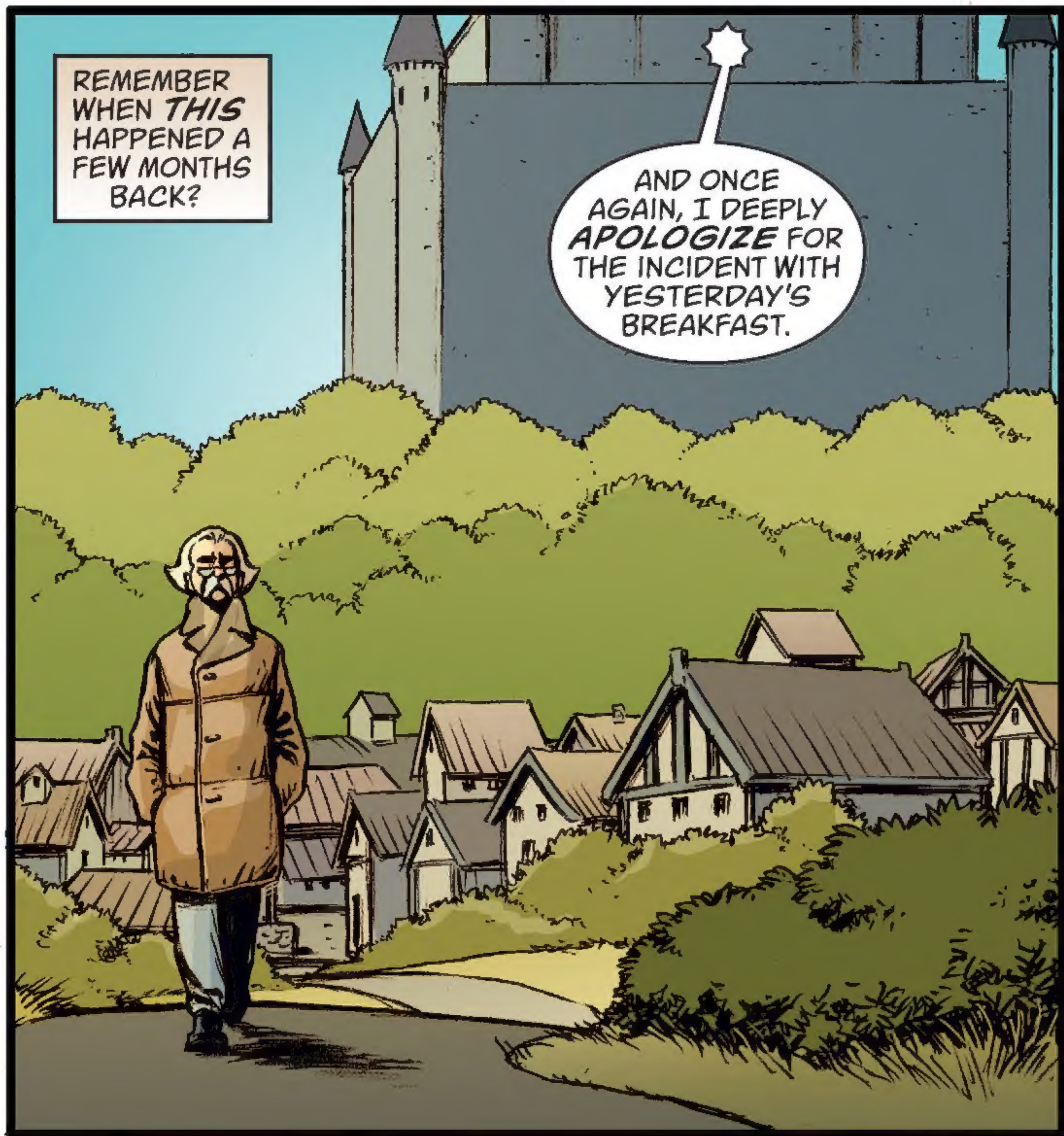
138 Apr '14
suggested for
mature readers
vertigo.comics.com





ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A DISTANT LAND, AND IN THAT LAND WAS THE MAGICAL KINGDOM OF HAVEN.

I PROMISE, Y'MAJESTY, THESE EGGS WON'T SCREAM WHEN YOU START TO EAT THEM.



REMEMBER WHEN THIS HAPPENED A FEW MONTHS BACK?

AND ONCE AGAIN, I DEEPLY APOLOGIZE FOR THE INCIDENT WITH YESTERDAY'S BREAKFAST.



HOW THOSE TALKING EGGS GOT MIXED UP WITH THE MUNDY EGG SUPPLY-- WELL, I SUSPECT HIJINKS AND SHENANIGANS FROM ONE OF YOUR SUBJECTS.

THAT WEYLAND FANCIES HIMSELF QUITE THE JOKER, HE DOES.

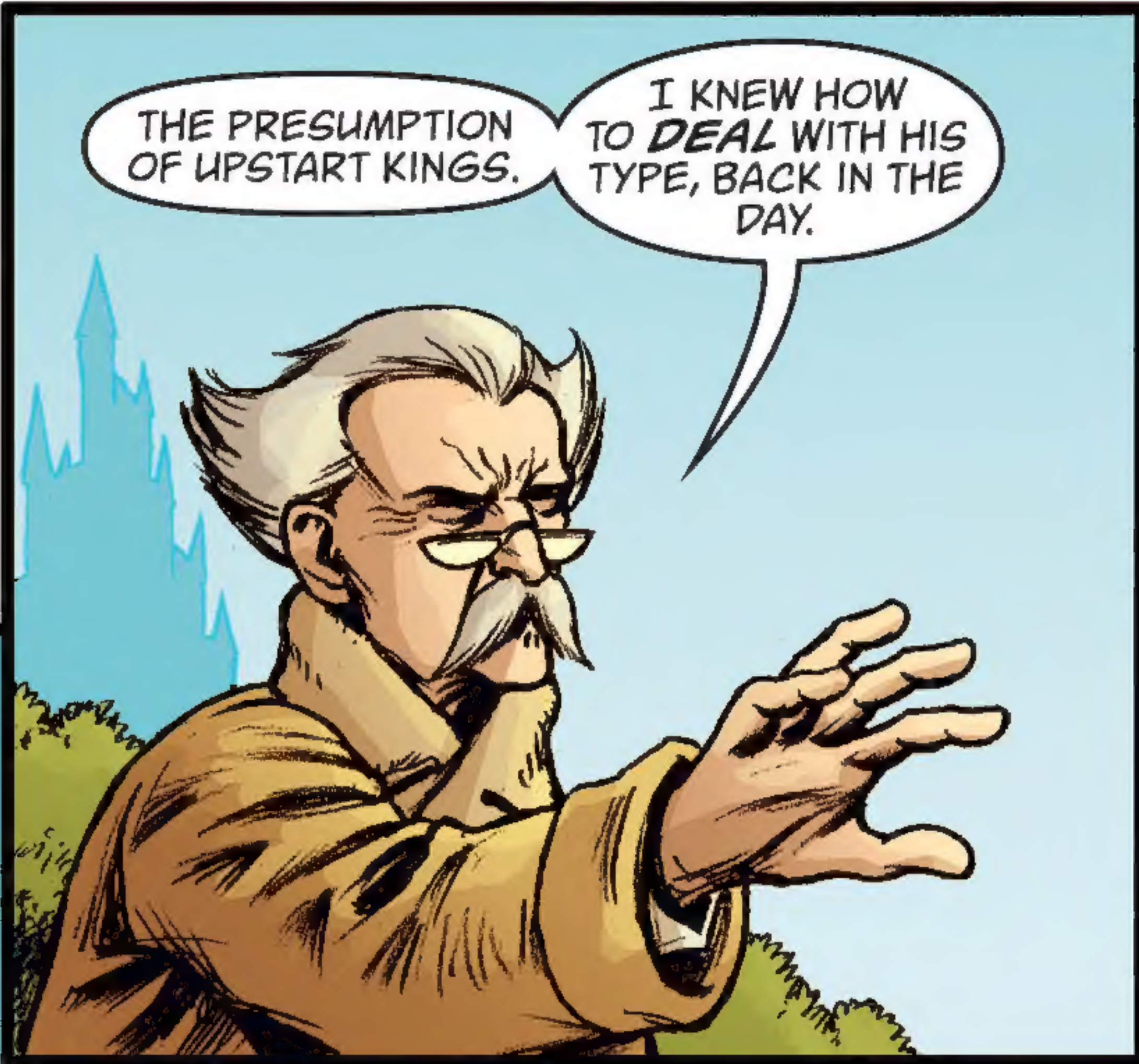
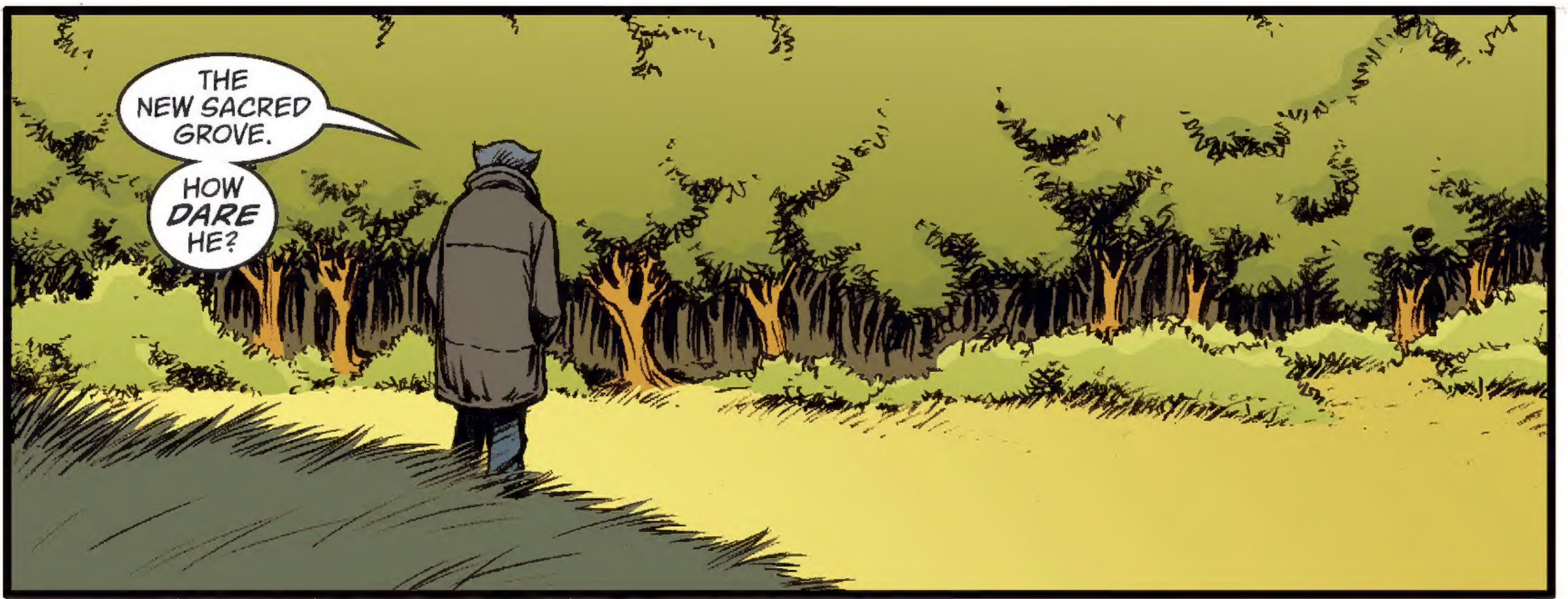
ROOT & BRANCH

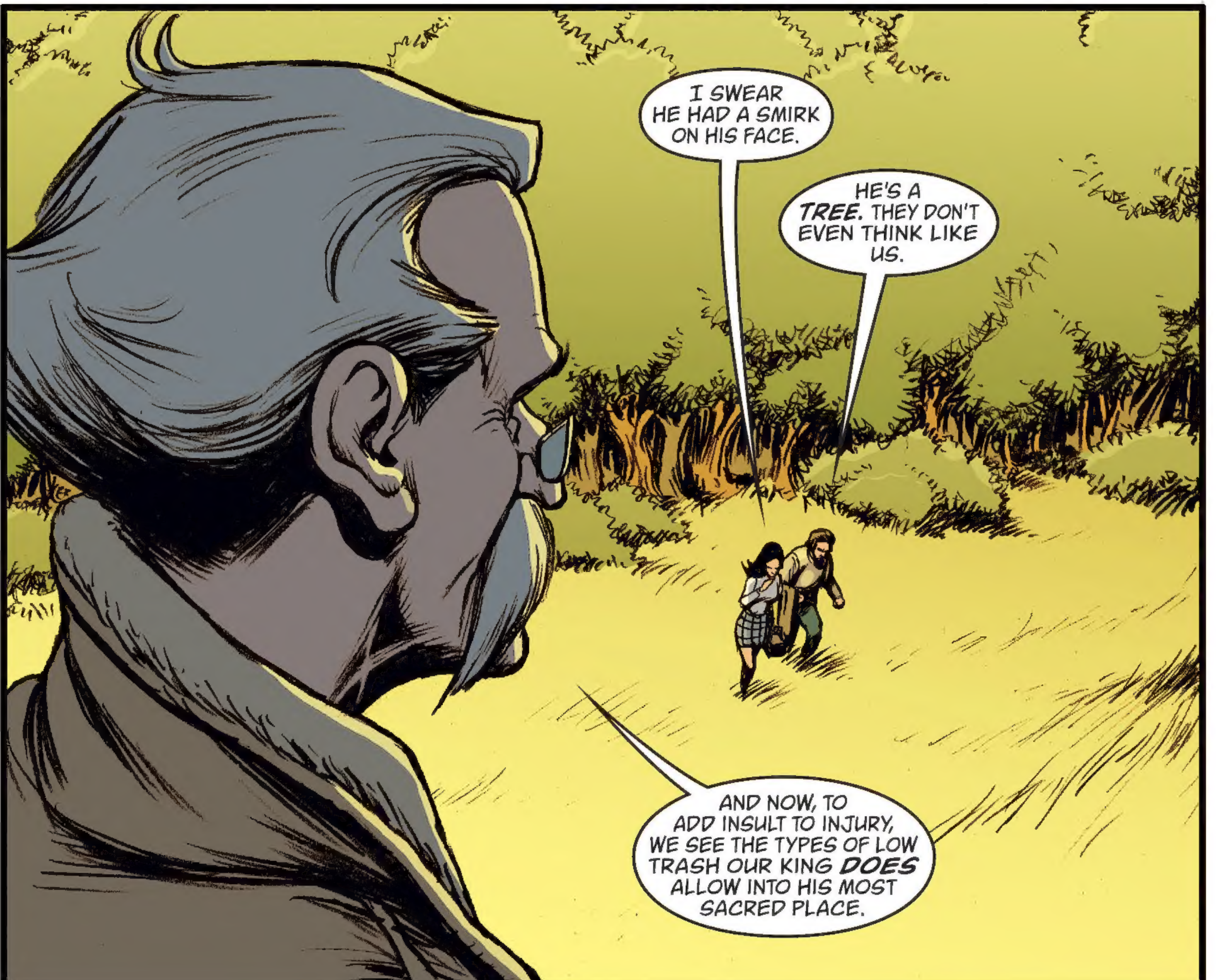
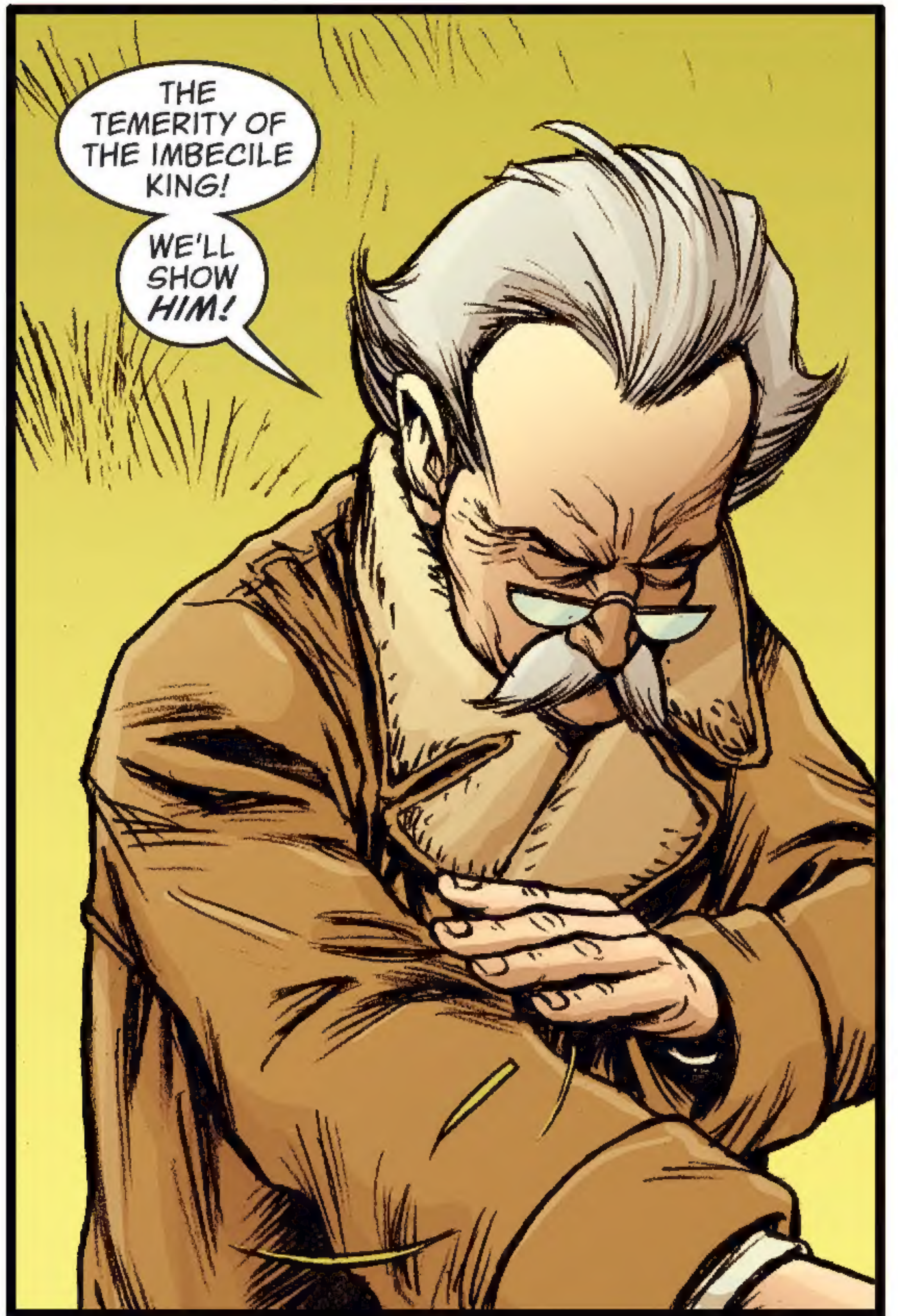
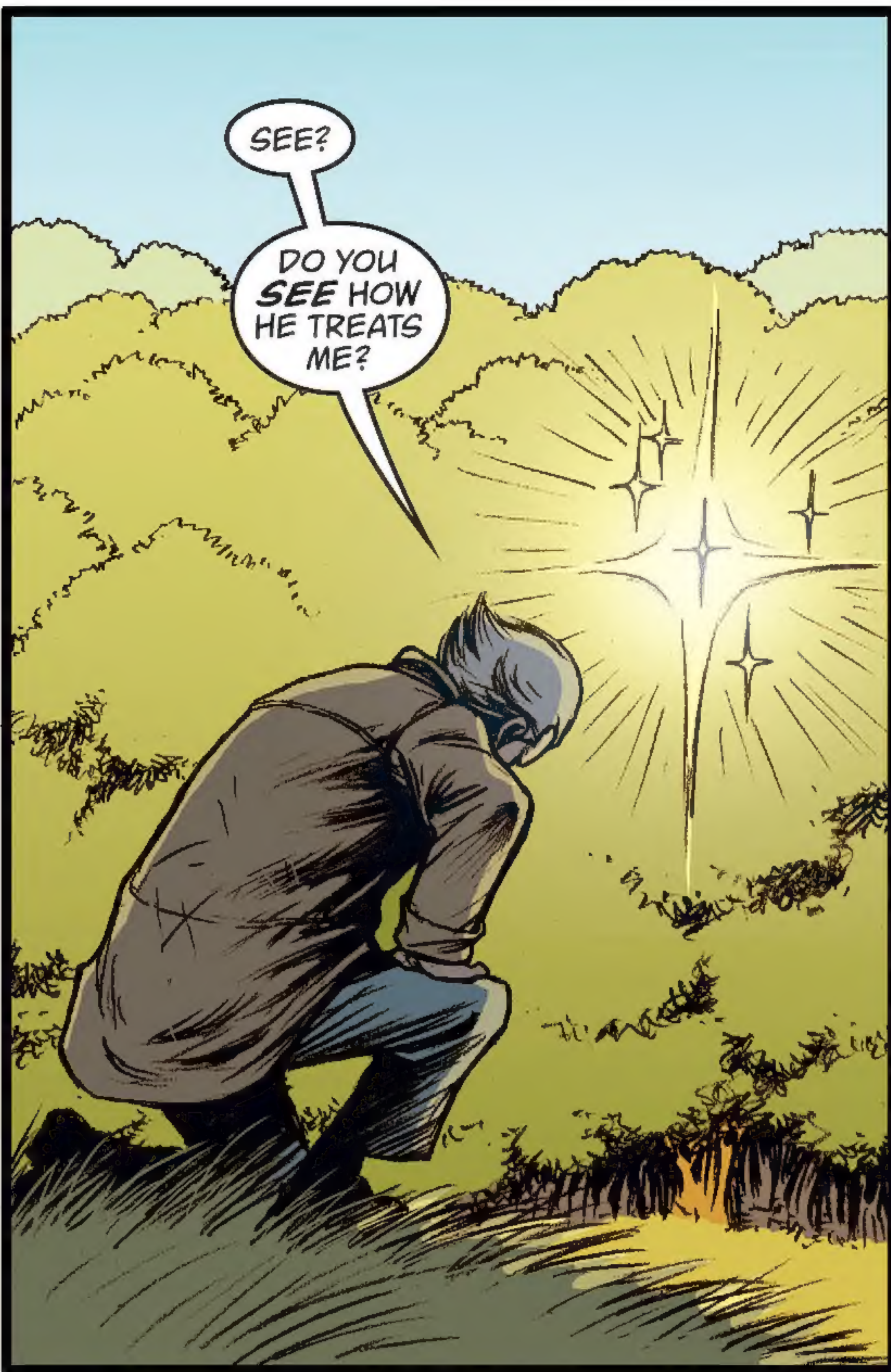


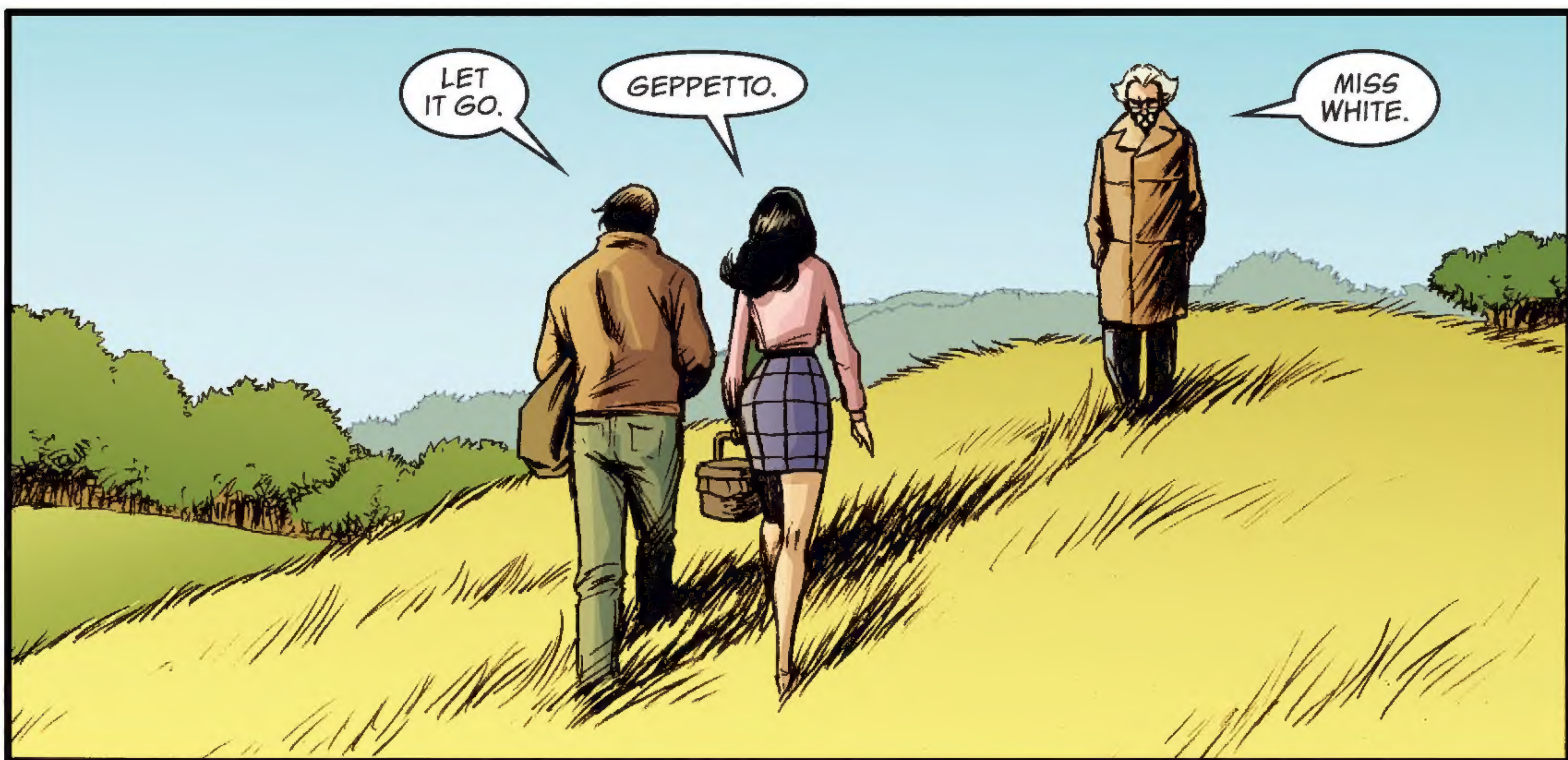
Finally, a look at what Geppetto has been up to lately.



BILL WILLINGHAM writer/creator	RUSS BRAUN artist	LEE LOUGHRIDGE colors	TODD KLEIN letters	CHRISTOPHER MOELLER cover	SARA MILLER asst. editor	SHELLY BOND editor
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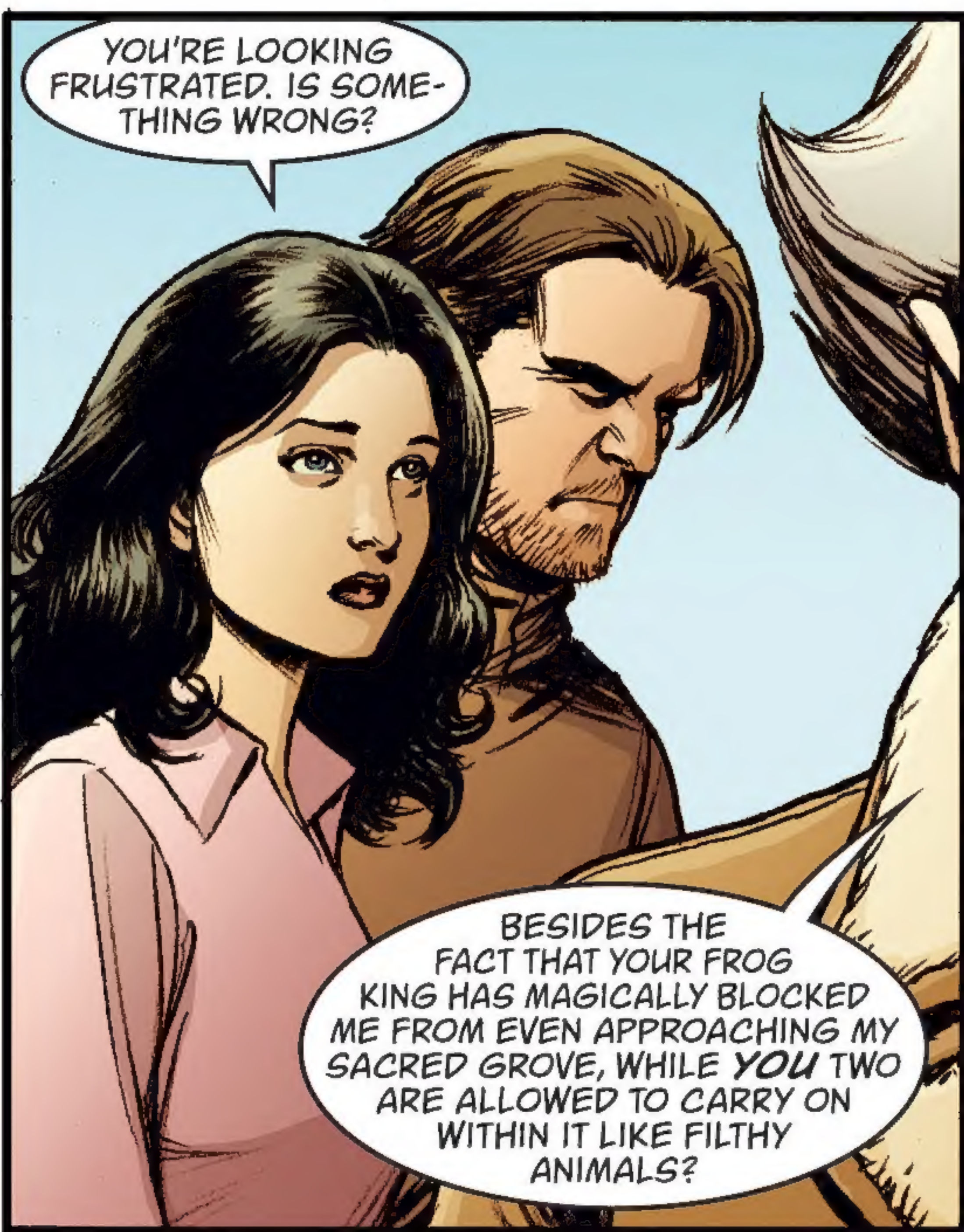




LET IT GO.

GEPPETTO.

MISS WHITE.



YOU'RE LOOKING FRUSTRATED. IS SOMETHING WRONG?

BESIDES THE FACT THAT YOUR FROG KING HAS MAGICALLY BLOCKED ME FROM EVEN APPROACHING MY SACRED GROVE, WHILE YOU TWO ARE ALLOWED TO CARRY ON WITHIN IT LIKE FILTHY ANIMALS?



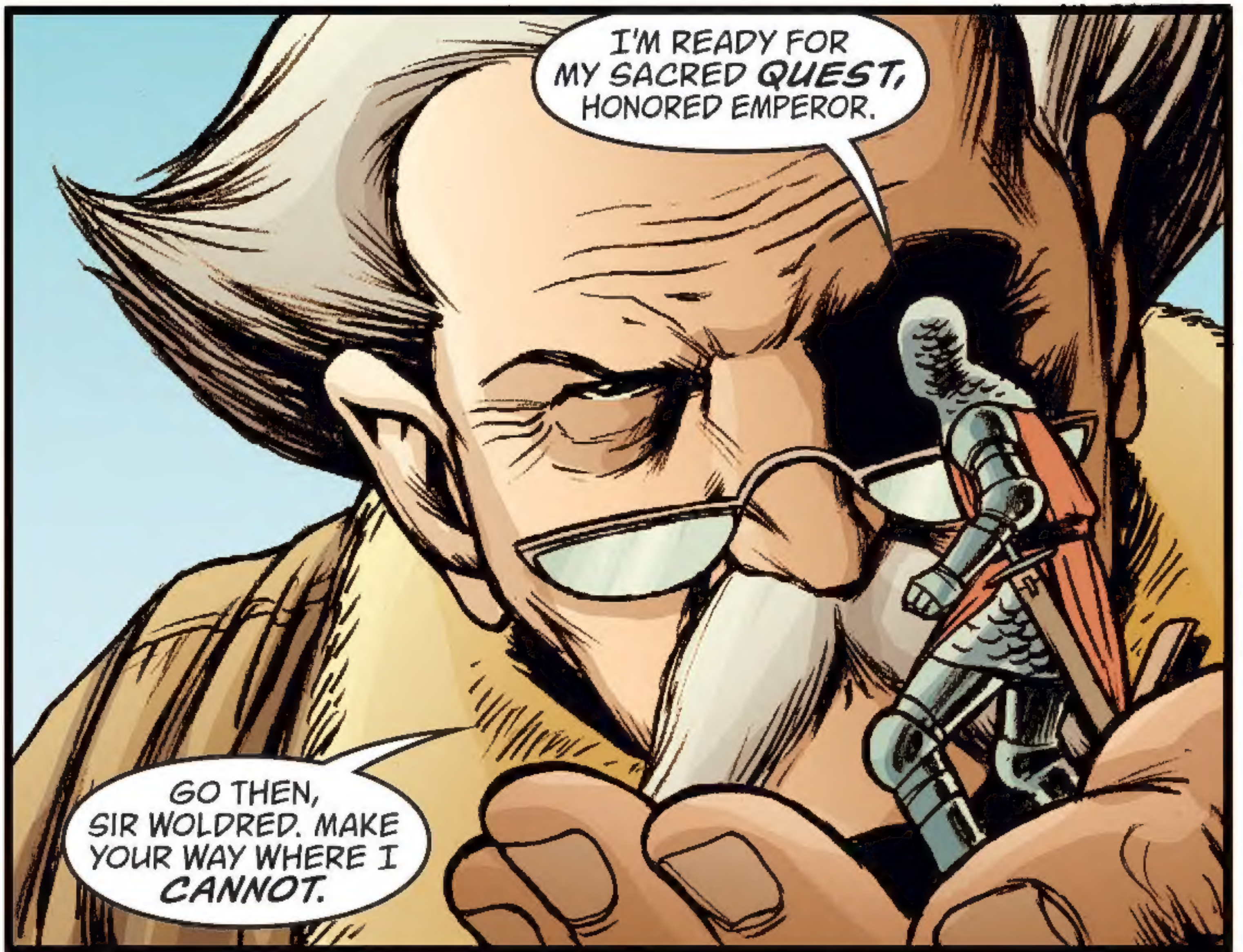
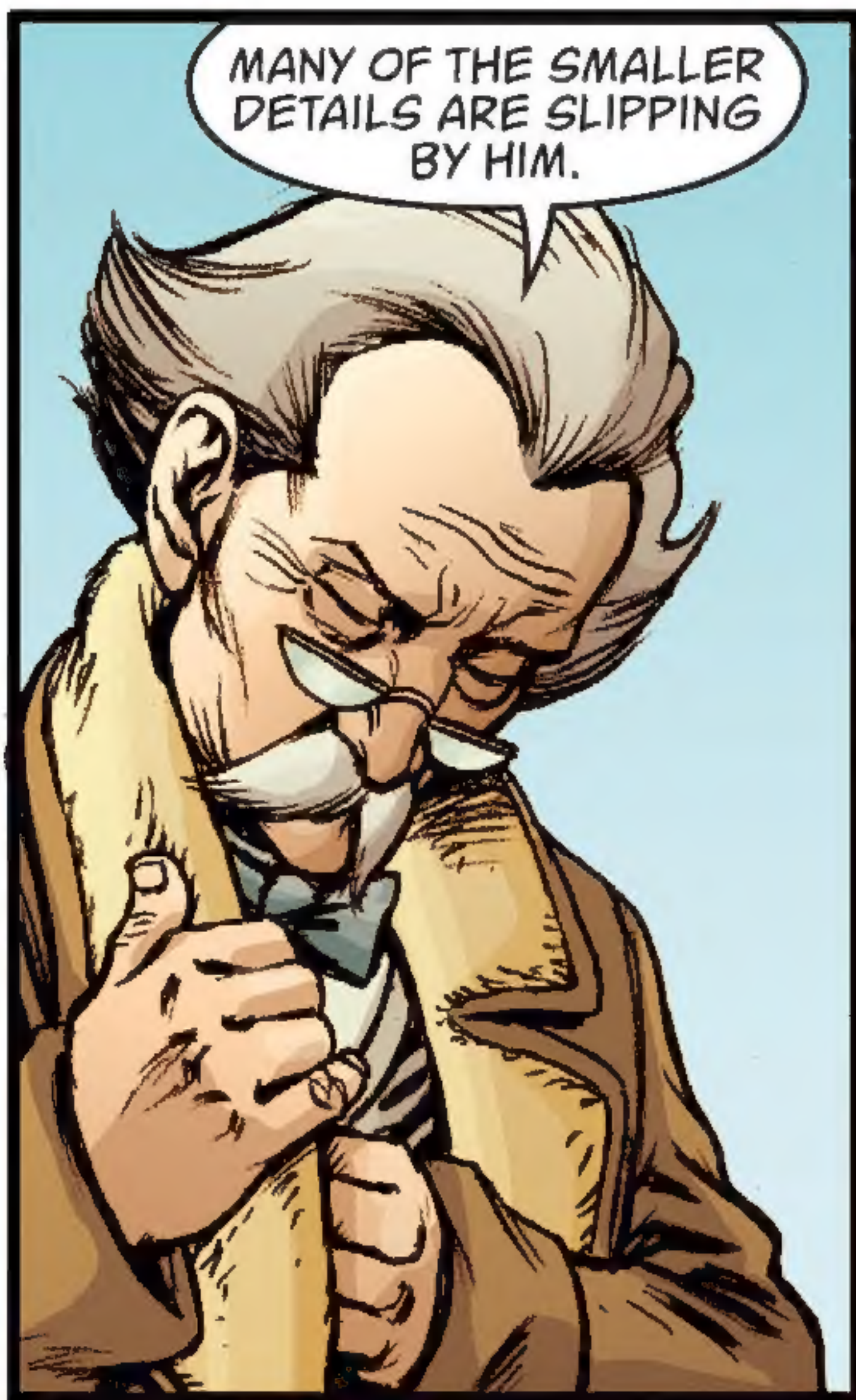
LET IT GO, HONEY.

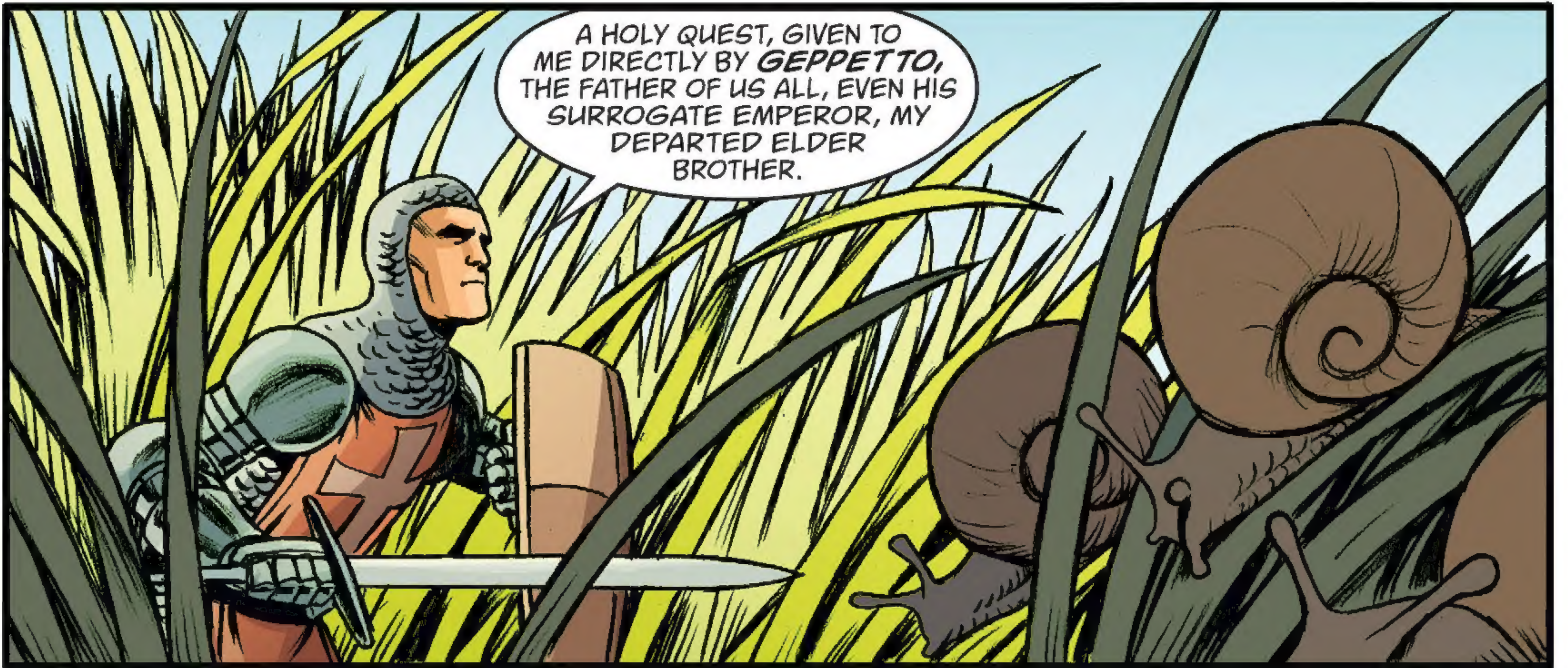
THEY'LL GET *THEIRS* IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME TOO.



THE PEASANT KING HAS BARRED ME FROM MY TREES, BUT HIS HOLD OVER MAGIC WITHIN HIS REALM IS NO LONGER AS COMPLETE AS IT WAS.

HE'S OVERBURDENED THESE DAYS. DISTRACTED.

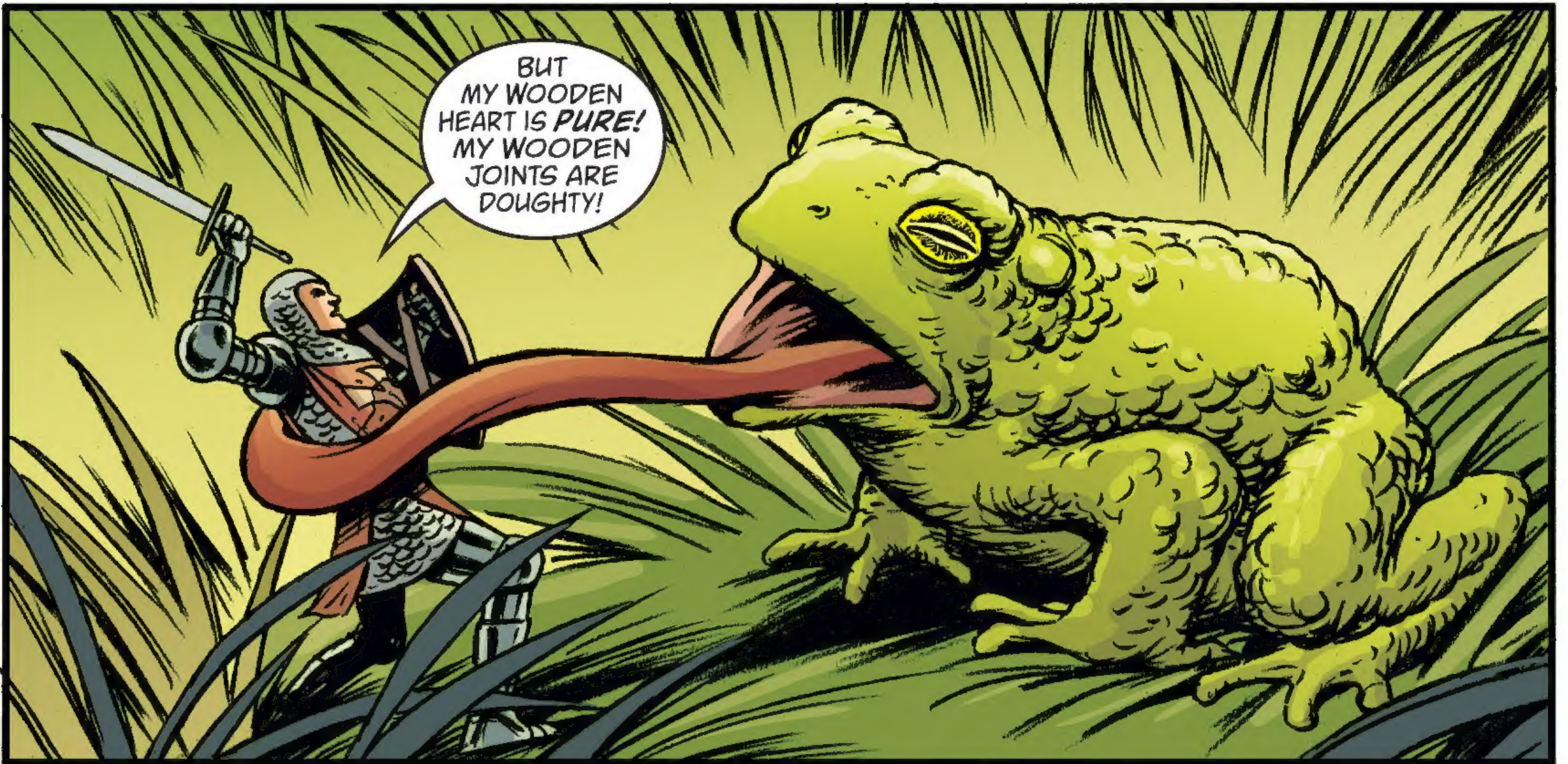


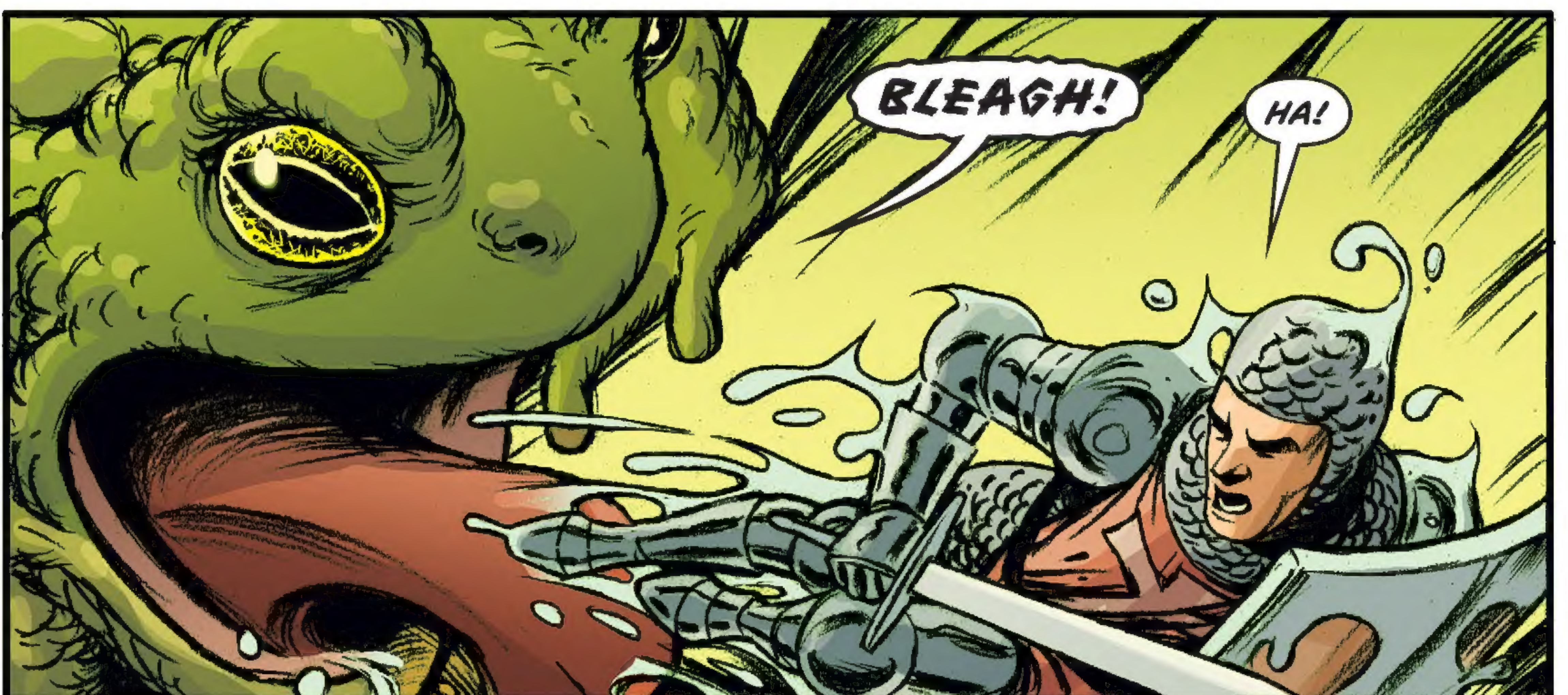


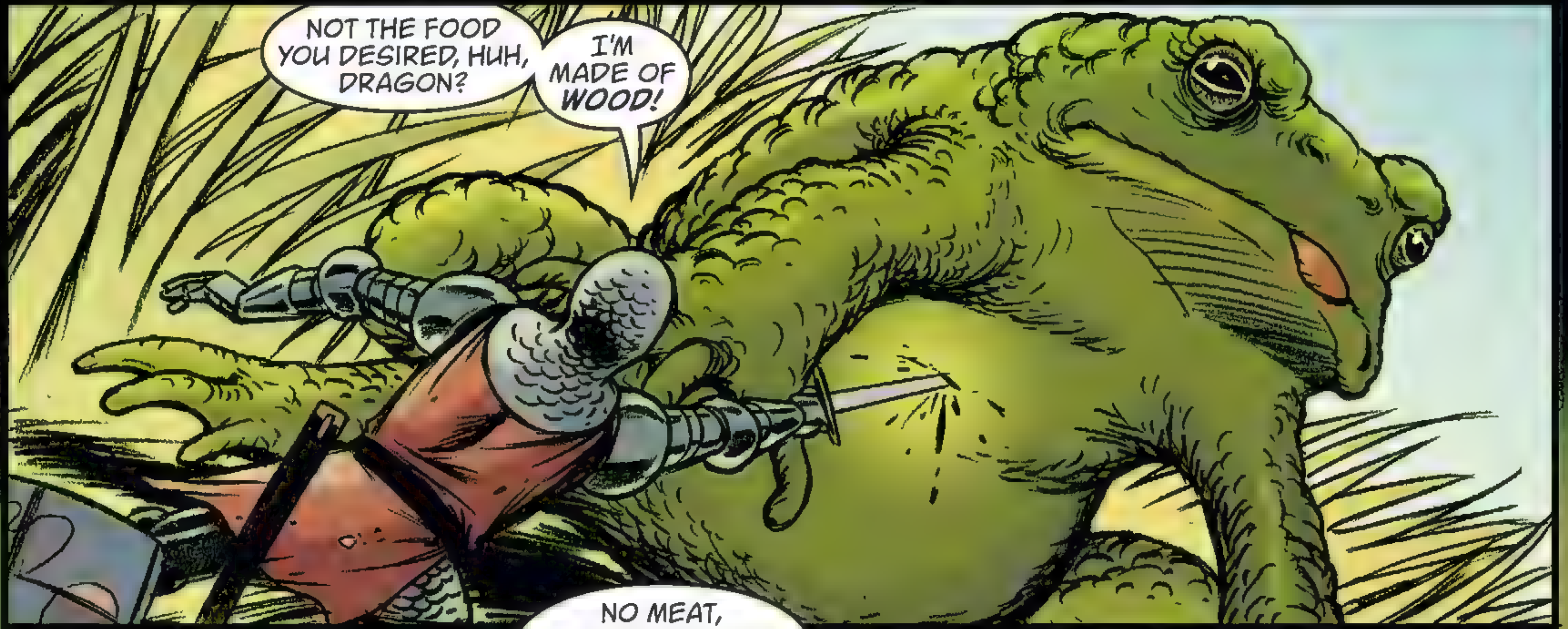
WOAAACK!



A DRAGON!







NOT THE FOOD YOU DESIRED, HUH, DRAGON?

I'M MADE OF WOOD!



NO MEAT, NOR BLOOD, NOR GUTS TO SATE YOUR LUSTY APPETITE!

I NEED NO FOOD OF MY OWN, NOR WILL I PROVIDE AUGHT TO RAVENING BEASTS!



THE ONLY THING SIR WOLDRED WILL PROVIDE TO FILL YOUR BELLY IS A GOOD INCH OF EMPIRE STEEL!

A BIT LATER...

DELAYED, BUT UNDAUNTED!

OVER THE NIGHT AND THE DAY AND THE NIGHT THAT FOLLOWED, SIR WOLDRED SUFFERED MANY OTHER TRIALS AND OBSTACLES.

BIGGER, WILDER AND BEFANGED! IT'S OF NO CONSEQUENCE TO ME!

FOR I AM A NOBLE KNIGHT OF THE WOOD!

I WILL NOT FAIL! I WILL NOT FALTER!

WOODPECKER! EVERY DIMINUTIVE WOODEN KNIGHT'S BANE!



AND ON THE
THIRD DAY...

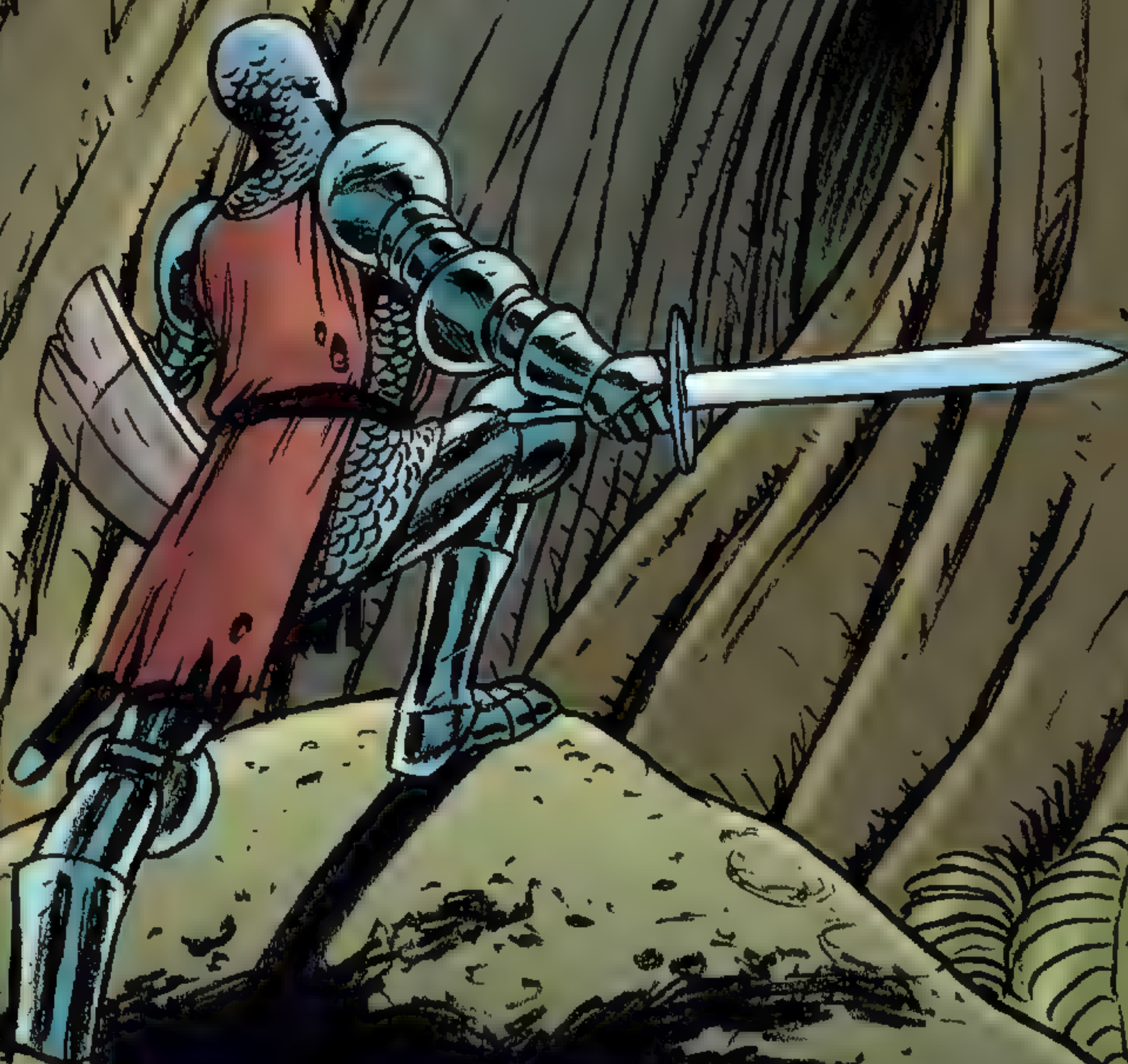
AT
LAST!

I STAND
IN THE SHADOW
OF MY STOLEN
BRETHREN.

THE
DEEP GREEN
CATHEDRAL!

THE
STANDS OF
POWER AND
GRACE.

THE
FINELY GRAINED
HEART OF THE
GROVE!









WHAT'S THIS?
WHAT FOUL SORCERY?



ENTER THIS GROVE AS A WOODEN SOLDIER AND STAY AS A NEW TREE.

THAT'S THE NATURE OF THE KING'S BLESSING.



KING'S CURSE, YOU MEAN!
I CAN'T BE A TREE! I HAVE A MISSION TO COMPLETE!



BEST RUN THEN, MISGUIDED LITTLE SPLINTER, BEFORE YOU TAKE ROOT AND BECOME A NOBLE SAPLING INSTEAD.



RUN I WILL!

THE NEXT NIGHT...

WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO SO LATE, GEPPETTO?

MY SUPPER DISAGREED WITH ME. A BIT OF BAD PORK, NO DOUBT.

I THOUGHT I'D TAKE A WALK TO HATCH OUT THE STOMACH POISONS.

WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE HE'S REALLY UP TO? WHERE'S HE ACTUALLY GOING?

SAME PLACE HE'S GONE EVERY DAY AND EVERY NIGHT FOR A WEEK--TO SIT AS CLOSE AS HE CAN GET TO THE GROVE AND STARE LONGINGLY AT IT.

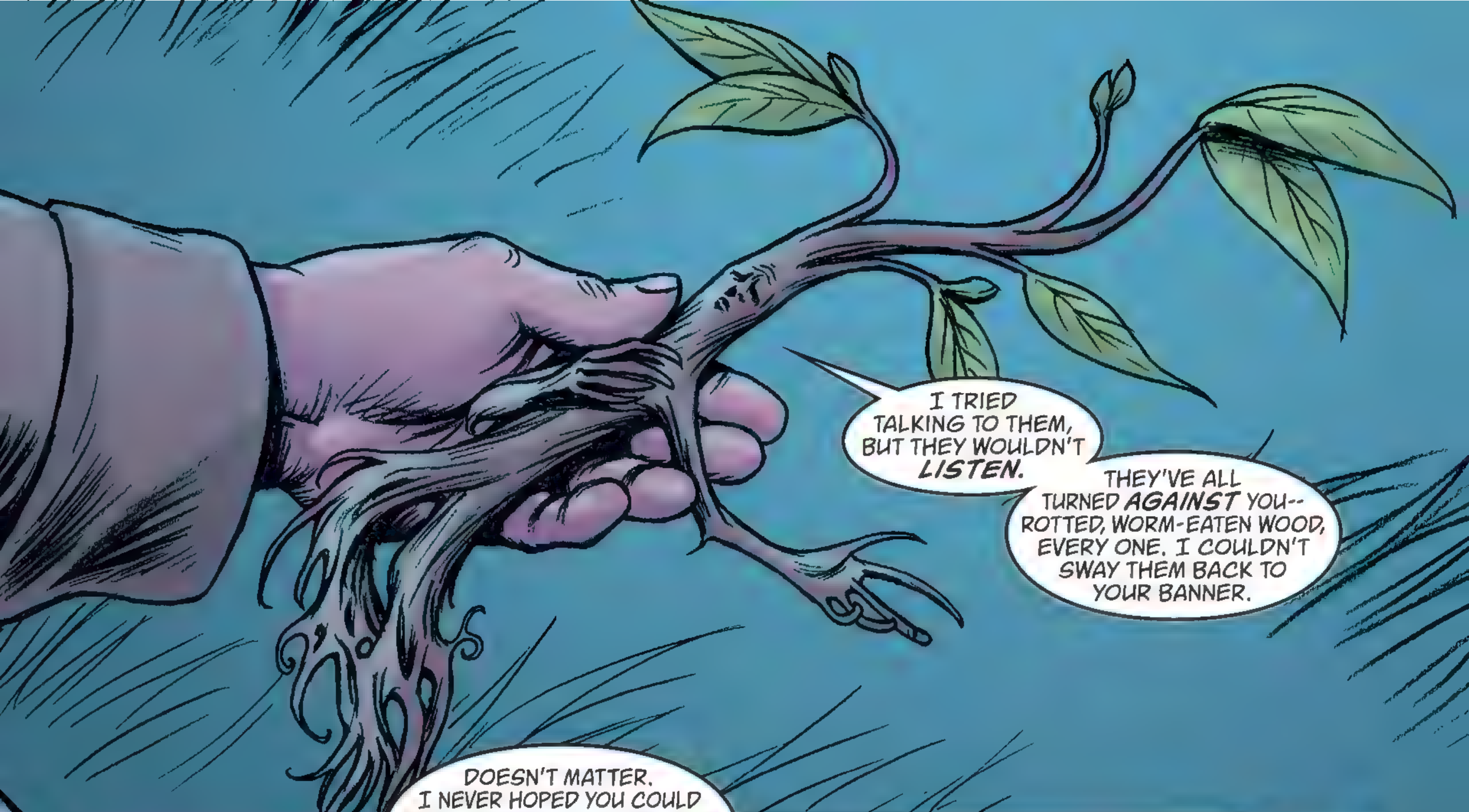
IT MUST TORTURE HIM SOMETHING FIERCE TO BE SO CLOSE TO HIS OLD POWER, BUT BE UNABLE TO MAKE USE OF IT. UNABLE TO EVEN APPROACH IT.

GOOD. I'M FOR ANYTHING THAT TORTURES THAT OLD CANKER.

I SERVED IN THE 504TH HORDE WHEN GEPPETTO ORDERED US ALL KILLED BECAUSE WE COULDN'T BEAT THE FLYCATCHER KING.

TOOK KING AMBROSE'S AMNESTY INSTEAD. NEVER REGRETTED IT, EXCEPT THE KING HAS FUNNY NOTIONS ABOUT WHAT'S ALLOWED TO GO IN A GOOD GOB'S STEW.





I TRIED TALKING TO THEM, BUT THEY WOULDN'T LISTEN.

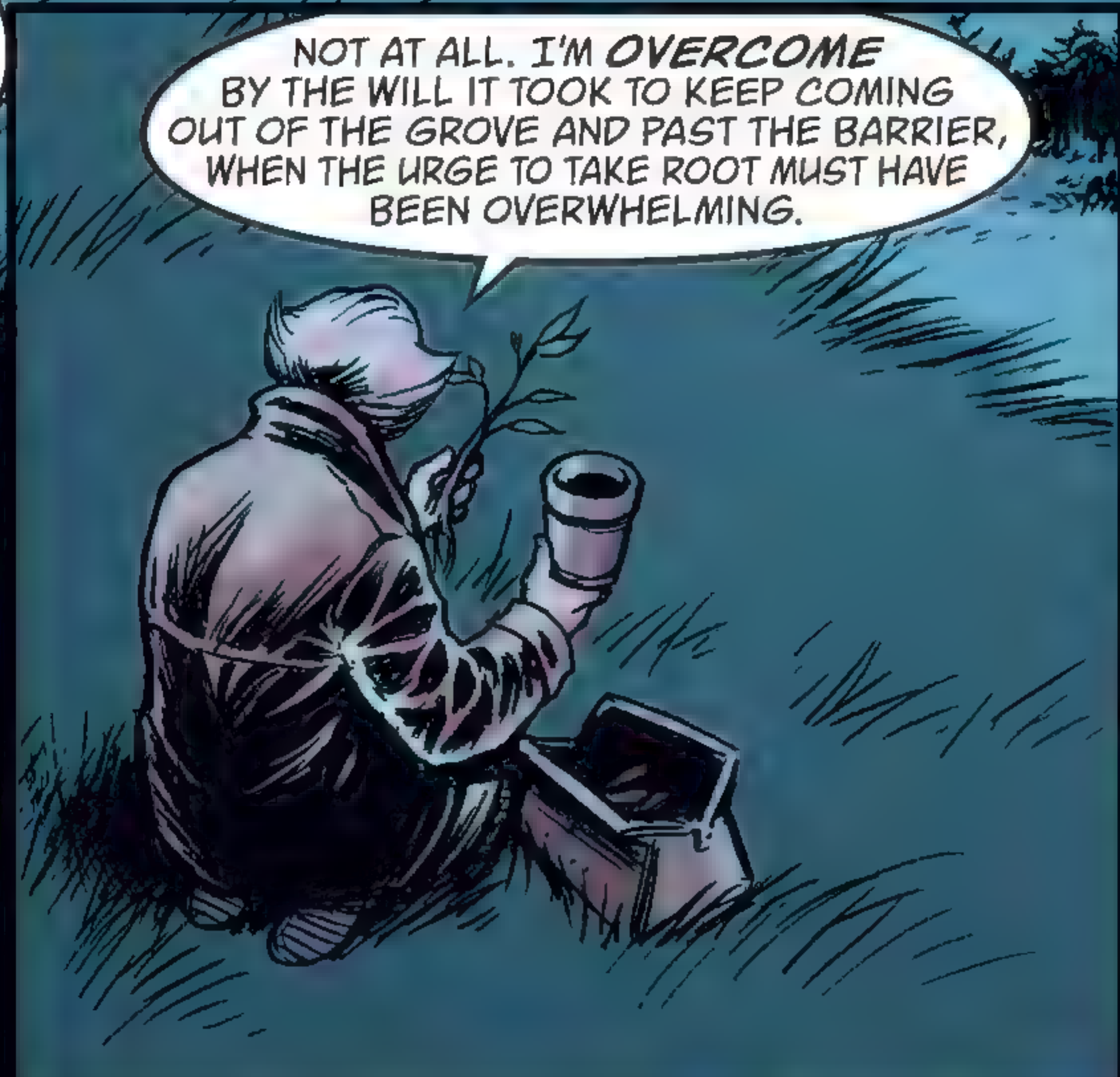
THEY'VE ALL TURNED AGAINST YOU-- ROTTED, WORM-EATEN WOOD, EVERY ONE. I COULDN'T SWAY THEM BACK TO YOUR BANNER.

DOESN'T MATTER. I NEVER HOPED YOU COULD TURN THEM BACK TO ME, FOR THEY'RE IN AN ALIEN SOIL, AND THE MAGIC THAT DIRECTS THEM NOW IS *OLD* AND COMPELLING.

YOUR *REAL* TASK WAS TO BECOME INFECTED AND FIND YOUR WAY BACK TO ME.

I DIDN'T FAIL?

NOT AT ALL. I'M *OVERCOME* BY THE WILL IT TOOK TO KEEP COMING OUT OF THE GROVE AND PAST THE BARRIER, WHEN THE URGE TO TAKE ROOT MUST HAVE BEEN OVERWHELMING.

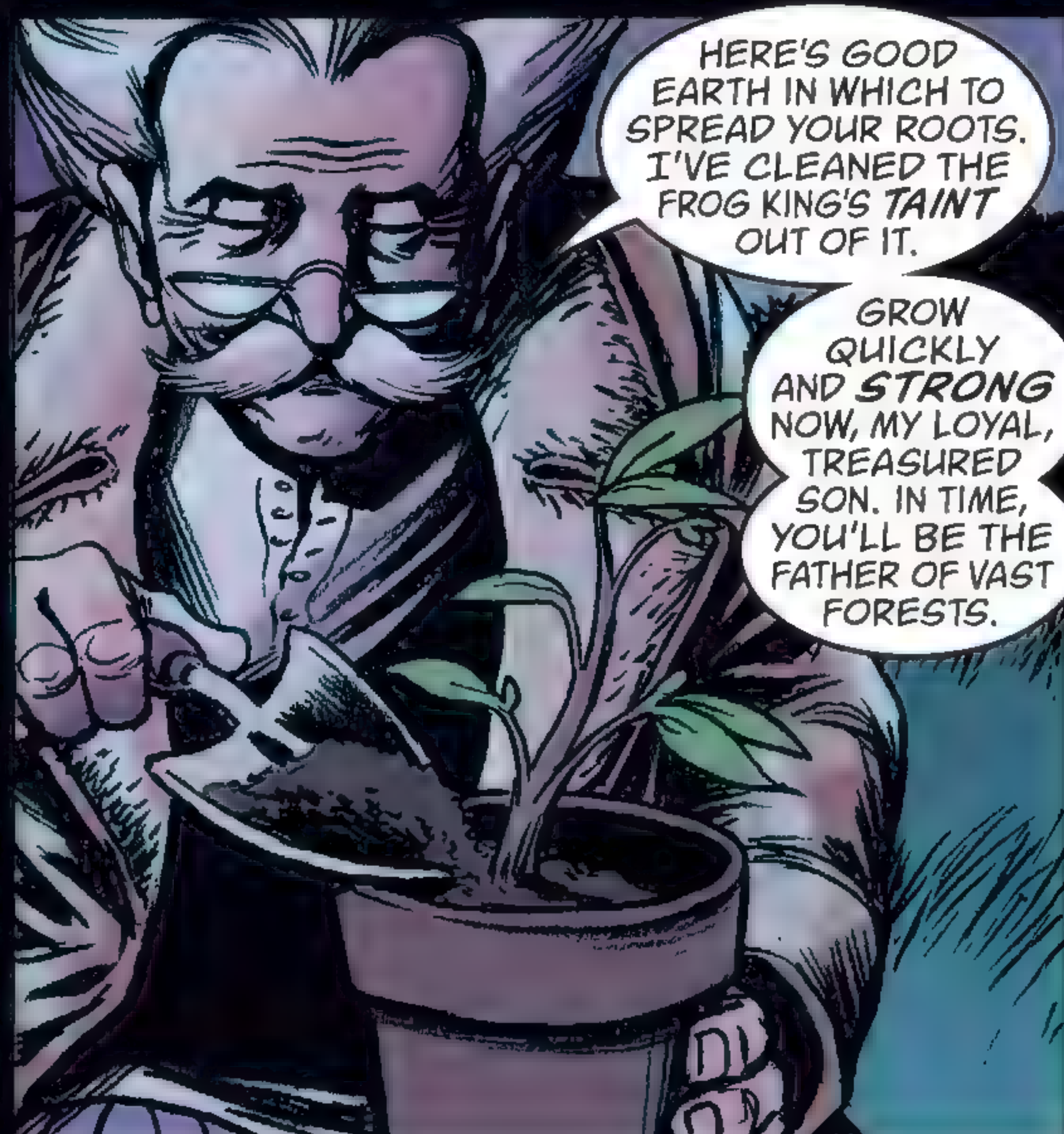
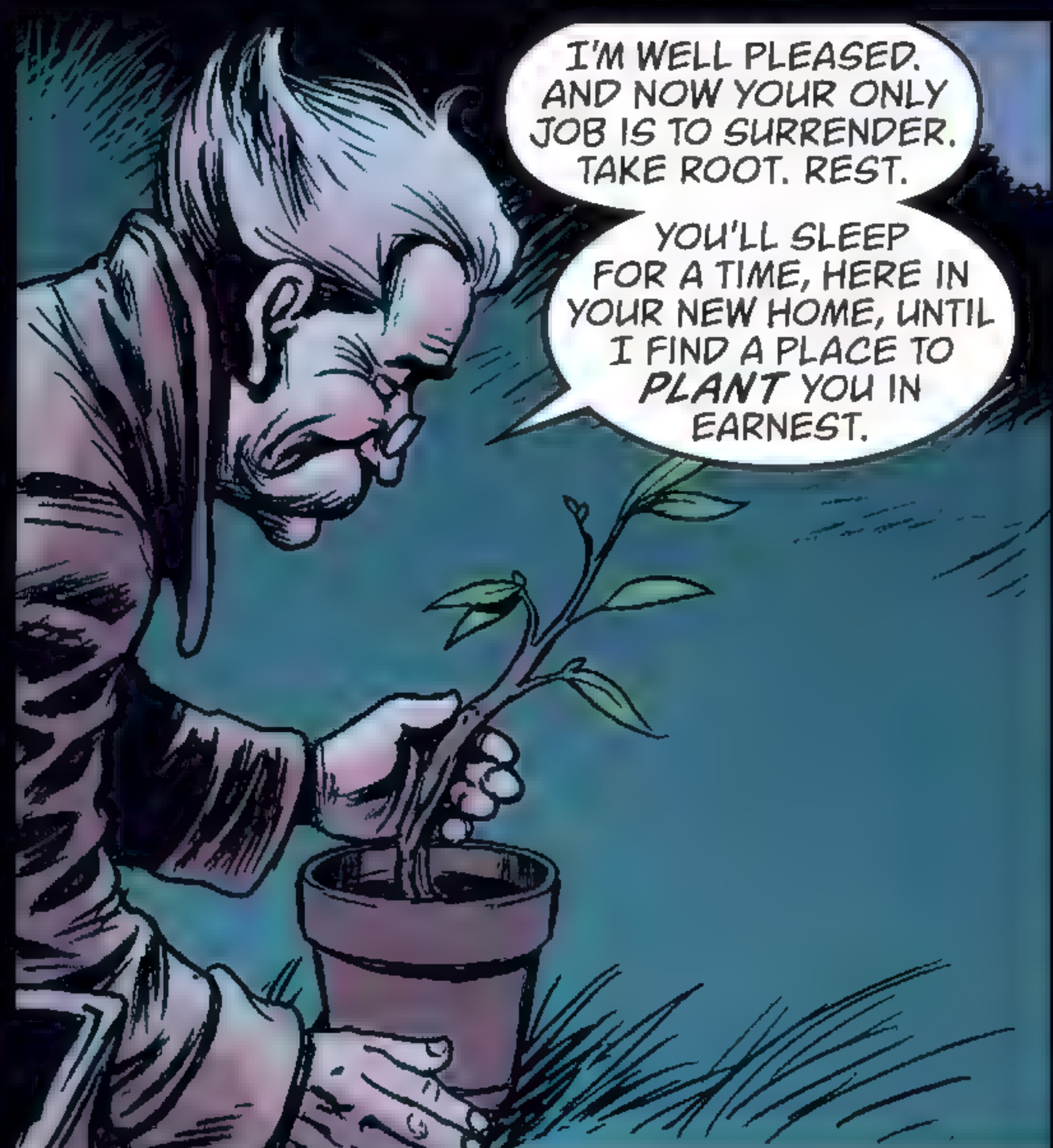


I'M WELL PLEASED. AND NOW YOUR ONLY JOB IS TO SURRENDER. TAKE ROOT. REST.

YOU'LL SLEEP FOR A TIME, HERE IN YOUR NEW HOME, UNTIL I FIND A PLACE TO *PLANT* YOU IN EARNEST.

HERE'S GOOD EARTH IN WHICH TO SPREAD YOUR ROOTS. I'VE CLEANED THE FROG KING'S *TAIN*T OUT OF IT.

GROW QUICKLY AND *STRONG* NOW, MY LOYAL, TREASURED SON. IN TIME, YOU'LL BE THE FATHER OF VAST FORESTS.





AND ABOUT A MONTH LATER,
IN THE DEEPEST WOODS ON
THE FARM...

THERE
YOU GO, MY SON.
FINALLY ROOM TO
GROW.

AND
OUR BARGAIN
IS **COMPLETED**,
GRANDFATHER OAK.
I'VE DONE ALL THAT
I PROMISED.

MY SON
WILL COUPLE WITH
YOUR CHILDREN. **HIS**
POWERS WILL SIP AT THE
WELL OF YOURS, AND
VICE VERSA.

IN TIME
THE COMBINED
STRENGTH OF BOTH
OUR GREAT HOUSES
WILL EMPOWER OUR
ARMIES TO SPREAD
OVER **THIS** WORLD
AND SO MANY
OTHERS.



The End

NEXT: STEVE
LEIALOHA ILLUSTRATES
"THE BOYS IN THE BAND."

GRAPHIC CONTENT

THE ROYALS: MASTERS OF WAR

"How do you know he's the King?"

"He's the only one that doesn't have shit on him."

And that's Royalty summarized nicely by one of the great thinkers of the late 20th century, Mr. Monty Python. Kings, Queens, Princes and Princesses live in beautiful castles while, outside, the population butcher each other in wars and starve to death quite a bit. It's "The Divine Right of Kings." The idea that Royals derive their position directly from the will of God. Ergo: they get the best stuff.

We take that idea to its logical conclusion and give them special powers.

In the world of THE ROYALS: MASTERS OF WAR, the only people who have super abilities are royalty, and the purer the bloodline, the more powerful the individual. Which explains all that <cough> inbreeding that may have taken place between Royal families over the centuries (Shhhhhh...).

So, to the "Masters of War." When we meet our "heroes" the Second World War is under way, and Britain is being heavily bombed by Nazi Germany. And Royals across the world have signed a treaty never to get involved in the wars of commoners.

But the noble-minded Prince Henry sees the London he loves burning and can take no more. When he intervenes, the treaty is broken. Every Royal on Earth enters the conflict, including the most powerful of them all, the immortal Emperor Jimmu of Japan...

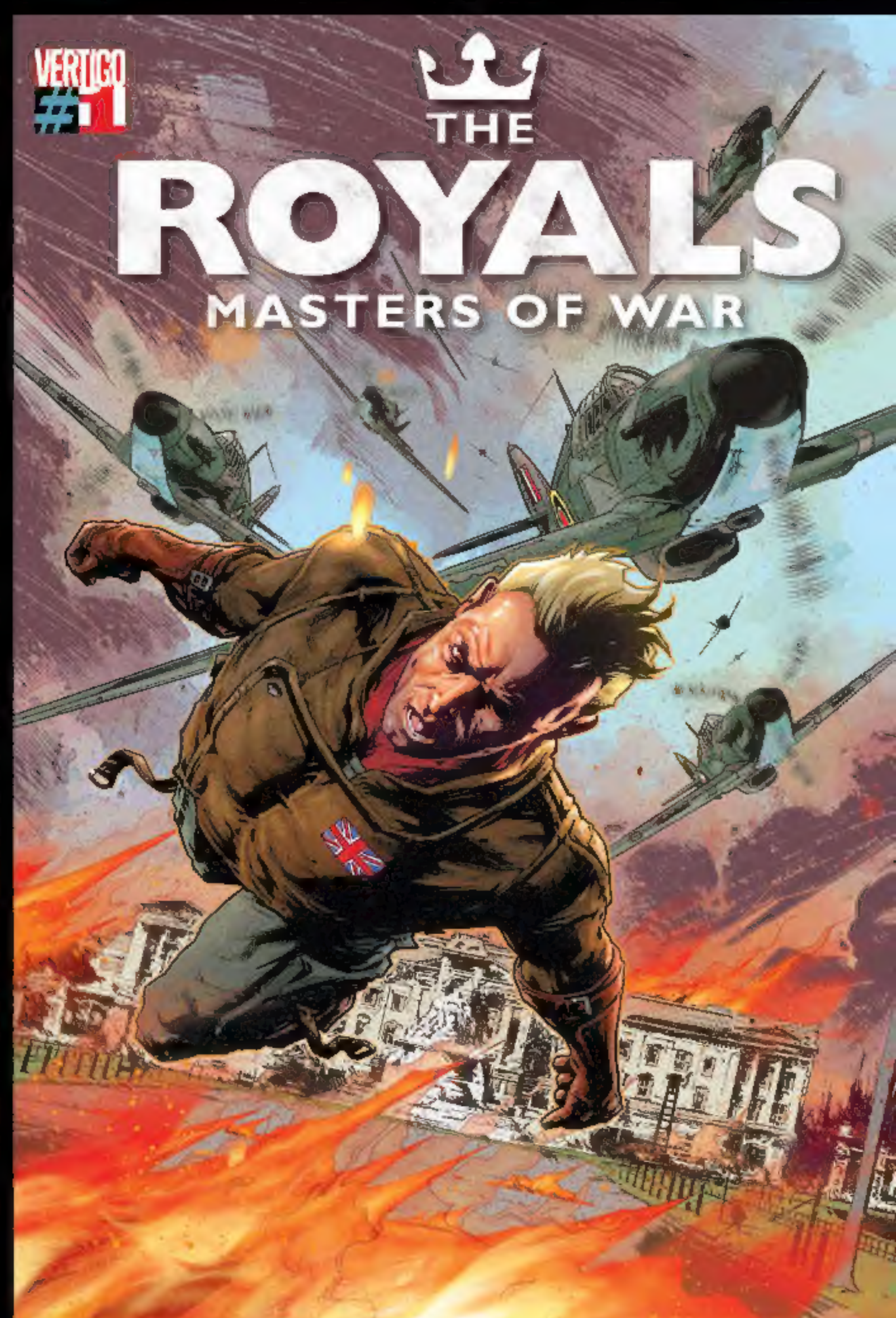
We follow our leads from 1940 to 1945, as they travel through some of the defining events of World War 2: Pearl Harbor, Stalingrad, D-Day... It's *Downton Abbey* meets the opening act of *Saving Private Ryan*. Great battles, a forbidden love affair, a nefarious spy, and some of the most beautiful period comic art you will ever see, by Simon Coleby.

As Jay-Z and Kanye West might advise, watch the throne.



— Rob Williams

Writer, THE ROYALS: MASTERS OF WAR

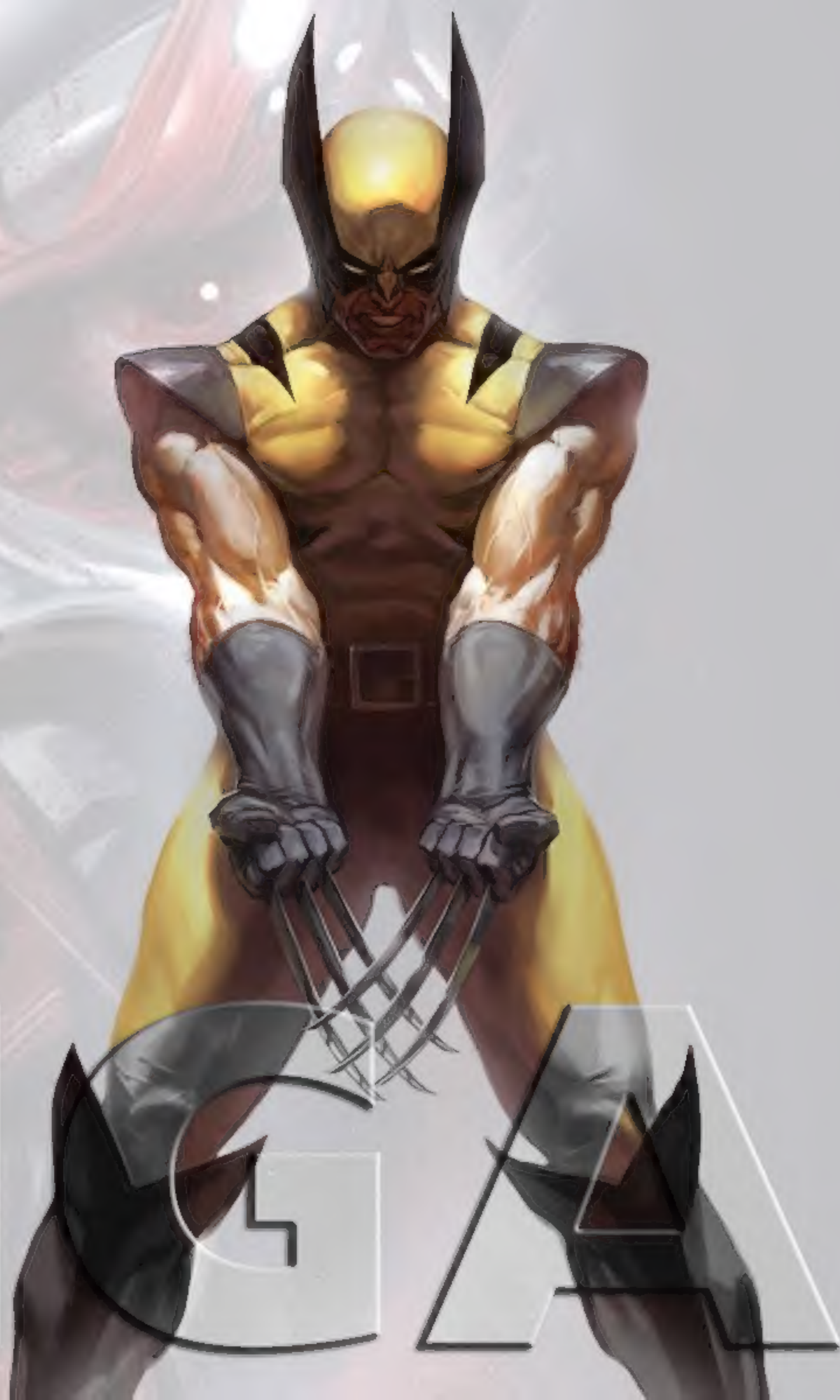


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NATHAN